

Church of Immaculate Conception

Parish Open Meetings

Notes - 26 January & 3 February 2019

Facilitator – PPC Chair

Presenters – Fr Antony & representatives of Liturgy, Maintenance, Finance
and Fundraising Groups

Key messages from Saturday 26/01/19 meeting

1. The open parish meeting is long overdue. Proposal to have PPC open meeting annually or every 2 years
2. The parish needs a long term strategy consisting of finance, estates, etc.
3. Fundraising strategy that will be linked to estate maintenance
4. The roof and the solar panels are 2 different things. Prioritisation should be given to the roof. The solar panel is a nice to have
5. What is the justification for solar panels?
6. Reconsideration of recommendation 1 in Fund raising strategy
7. Critical response to decision of dropping parish charity
8. Positive response to sponsoring a roof tile by all who attended
9. Induction required for parishioners joining new groups such as PPC
10. Publicise PPC meetings in advance and ask people to suggest agenda items
11. Transparency of PPC leadership team
12. Clear communication needed by PPC regarding agenda items, discussions and decisions
13. Using talents from within the parish community to support the running of the parish
14. Communicate on a weekly/monthly basis our progress in fundraising
15. Suggestion box to be placed at the back of the church for parishioners to engage

Additional Key messages from Sunday 03/02/19 meeting

1. The Diocese has some management of the money available to the parish. We have £57,000 in our parish bank account. Some of the money available to us is ring-fenced for specific purposes so cannot be used.
2. Are there other ways of supporting charities, rather than fundraising?
3. We have to use contractors approved by the Diocese to ensure compliance with Health & Safety regulations
4. A concise parish vision is needed, taking into account the changing demographics of the parish and the likely future needs of the community.

Parish Open meetings

26 January and 3 February 2019

Questions, Answers & Discussion points

What is the justification for Solar panels?

- Long term savings on energy
- Sell unused energy back to the grid
- Looking after our environment
- In response to the encyclical 'Laudato Si' (Care for our Common Home – relating to our responsibilities towards climate change, the environment and sustainable development)

Discussion

- Is there any guarantee that we will make savings on installing solar panels?
- There are now changes in government policy.
- Government tariff subsidies are due to end in March 2019 for green energy
- The only financial benefit will be savings on your energy bill for the power you generate and use yourself.
- Solar panels can generate a lot of electricity
- How many panels can the south facing side of the roof carry?
- How much electricity will it generate? – every quotation has estimates of energy to be generated
- Energy could be stored
- **ACTION: PPC to review the recommendation on solar panels before a final decision is made**

The church roof is the priority – can we look at having the solar panels later?

- A decision was made to attach integrated (in-line to the tiles) solar panels and it would be more cost effective to fit them at the same time as repairing the roof.

Discussion

- Seems crazy to have another wish list for the solar panels when we have so much to raise for the roof alone.
- Cost of the solar panels is £20,000
- We could store our own electricity from any extra produced by the solar panels, using battery technology
- **ACTION: PPC to review decision to have solar panel on roof**

Who is responsible for the roof?

- Why do we not have a bigger loan?
- Roof is condemned – what would happen if we did not address the issues of the roof?
- If the roof collapsed, then the church would be closed
- If anything happens in the parish, the Parish Priest is accountable to the Bishop
- Is the roof our responsibility?
- Yes, the roof is the responsibility of the parish. The Diocese will not pay for us. The building of the church was paid for by parishioners and continues to be maintained by them. Financially it is for us to support the diocese rather than the diocese supporting us.

Why can we not use the services of trades people in our area?

- The diocese insists that a particular contractor is used in this area. They know the layout of our plant, so this is an advantage of using them. They are however more expensive but in the long run, it is safer using recommended diocesan contractors.

Can we use the Living our faith fund for the roof?

- £18,000 pounds in Living our faith fund
- Uncertainty as to whether an application can be made for anything other than evangelisation.
- **ACTION: PPC to investigate whether we can use the Living our Faith fund for roof project**

Are there other Grant applications we have applied for/investigated?

- There are funds in the diocese that we can apply for.
- They all take time for the application to be completed, processed and decisions to be made.
- Some of the money available to the parish is ring fenced so cannot be used for the roof.
- If someone wants to take of the role of investigating and apply for other possible funds this would be welcomed.

Concerning the 2nd investment applications we have applied (DOPIF), does the money come to us and do we know what return we get on it?

- The investment fund is managed by the diocese. Valuations go up and down. We take some interest from it every year.
- We can ask for the money anytime as it belongs to the parish
- Choosing your time to extract it is the best thing
- When that money is used by other parishes, then we lose interest on it? When it is in an investment fund, it takes a while for us to get it back.
- DOPIF Other is excess money that we deposit to the Diocese every year to be invested for us
- £57,000 is in our current account
- Excess funds in the parish current account are swept by the Diocese to temporarily place in the accounts of other parishes to avoid them paying bank charges if their account is overdrawn

Response to Fundraising proposals

- Buying a tile is an attractive idea
- Re the recommendation on asking people to contribute at family events (baptisms, funerals etc. - families usually raise monies for charities. So to raise money for roof is sensitive.
- Additional ideas for consideration:
 - Bingo in the hall on one evening. In the past this has been popular and raised money.
 - Lottery – (the PPC recently made a decision not to use gambling schemes to raise money for the church)
 - Could we find a good wine wholesaler and ask how much they can sponsor us?
 - Is there anything in Canon law that allows for us to stop paying a subsidy to the Diocese?
 - Alumni requests for funds – contact former parishioners for funds
- **ACTION: Review Canon law in relation to payment of subsidies to the Diocese**
- **ACTION: Is there a list of former parishioners that we can contact in our attempt to raise funds for the roof the way universities contact alumni's?**

Could we consider asking parishioners to loan us money?

- This has been done by City Mission in Southampton for a house purchase project
- Each investor could be paid back – then we would not have to sacrifice the parish charity
- This would have to go through the diocesan finance
- Some evangelical churches have a tithing group - 10% of parishioners income

Parish Charity/Fundraising

- Parish charity decision was imposed on the parish
- It would make sense for money to go to the roof in the mean time
- It'll be difficult to raise money and tell a charity you'll only have 10% or 20%
- Negotiating the split is challenging
- We need the money, therefore we should raise money for the roof
- This is not the only thing that we support outside of our parish. There are other ways that we contribute such as CAFOD, Basic Banks and Pottier project
- Could there be a distinction between fundraising and our charity?
- What about asking for legacies: It would be important for a legacy form to be worded so that the purpose of the money was clearly ringfenced if the donor so wished.

Could we review the decision to stop fundraising for a parish charity?

Discussion

- Parish charity being dropped for 5 years is of concern
- The parish charity brings charitable giving to a focal point
- Any decision to suspend charitable giving must be 'revoked' rather than 'reviewed' once the loan has been paid back.
- We have a role as a Christian community to support others in need
- If we drop the parish charity, how can we ask other people outside our parish to make a contribution to the roof only through prizes and other donations etc
- Suggestion that we give a selected parish charity 10% of the building fund each year.
- We have raised more with the second collections at Masses than we had imagined
- **ACTION: PPC & Fundraising Group to Review decision to drop parish charity**

Could we have Annual Open Parish Meetings?

Discussion

- Why have we not had a meeting in recent years? The last took place when we were splitting the parishes into Pastoral Areas.
- In the past the meetings were held in July. Could we set this up again?
- Can we locate a suggestion box at the back of the church for parishioners to put forward their ideas?
- **ACTION: Explore booking an annual open parish meeting well in advance at a suitable time in the year, possibly in July as this has worked well in the past.**
- **ACTION: Make the suggestion box more obvious at the back of the church with pens and paper and encourage parishioners to engage with it. This should be anonymous? Comments to be collected by the parish office for review by Parish Priest, PPC or parish group as appropriate.**
- **ACTION: Consider incorporating the option to give electronic feedback online via the website.**

Could we consider having a Project Manager to manage the planning of a 10 year strategy for buildings, maintenance and the transparency of discussions/decisions by PPC?

Discussion

- It is not clear what the role of parish members is or what they have done.
- Responsibilities of individuals do not seem clear – possibly individuals don't want to show responsibility, however, they should not be seen as holding accountable positions.
- Suggestion that we should move away from democratic senior leadership to dictatorship
- Would like to hear about infrastructure plans and the details of the proposed leadership team – what are their roles and how does this structure operate?
- Are there volunteers trained for specific jobs – eg fundraising, DBS etc
- **ACTION: Ensure new volunteers to groups have inductions from other experienced members, with retraining on a regular basis to keep up to date.**
- Transparency of the structure for the parish is very important. Other representatives within the parish need to be encouraged to volunteer their participation in parish council and other parish groups.
- Acknowledgement that people are generally very busy and under pressure with their own family lives and it is not always easy to commit to arrangements on a regular basis.
- However, there is a lot of knowledge and expertise amongst parishioners within our community – sharing talents and responding to requests when people have talents or expertise needs to be encouraged.
- Legalities, safeguarding –the means to address it in the church is crucial
- The PPC agree that the governance of the church needs to be improved and there is a governance structure currently being worked on.
- **ACTION: Make available the slides used for the meeting – put on website and in porch**

The PPC – constitution, transparency & communicating with parishioners

- Parish council has become a closed shop
- The parish is not being given enough of an opportunity to respond
- More needs to be done to recruit people onto the PPC – promote the benefits of being on the PPC
- People should serve for 3 years or less, giving others a chance to use their ideas, expertise and talents.
- Better communication required
- Parish Open meetings should be organised on a regular basis
- PPC minutes are available to read in the file in the church, although not everyone reads them
- Parishioners must send to the PPC any burning issues they would like raised
- There seems to be a disconnect between suggestions/questions → Discussion → Response
- It would be useful for the parish to view PPC agenda in advance of meeting
- The PPC is a consultative group, not an executive group
- The responsibility of the parish rests on the priest
- Without the governance structure, the priest would not be able to operate and the parish would not survive
- Getting the right people on the parish council is also important
- It is important that all the groups are working to the greater glory of God

ACTION:

- **Develop a communication strategy - Request volunteers to address how we improve communication by senior leaders in PPC to parishioners and vice versa. How can we use technology to communicate with parishioners?**

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- Constitution of the PPC to be located and made visible – porch noticeboard
- Include it in the welcome pack and on the website
- Encourage parishioners to submit items for discussion on the PPC Agenda via the suggestions box. Advertise this after Mass before PPC meetings.
- PPC Agenda to be published in advance to help make it explicit why a particular issue was discussed and reading of the minutes makes more sense.
- Make a PPC Decision log available to view in the minutes folder
- Ensure new PPC members have an induction on remit of the group, regularity of meetings and a clear definition of their roles

Parish Vision – it is more than governance & organisation

- We need to consider:
 - the demographic of the church
 - where is our parish going to be in 10 years?
 - a concise parish vision and a strategy to back it up
 - who we are and what we are trying to do
 - mission and evangelisation in Southampton
- 8.30 mass has 70-80 people. We've lost key parishioners who were actively involved in the parish
- 10.30am mass has a bigger congregation
- Look at who comes – some are local and many are students and people passing through who are not committed or loyal to the parish. How do we engage them?
- Look at the long term aim of the estate as a whole rather than just the roof – the church and use of the hall as a joint venture rather than dealing with isolated cases.
- How do we get use the plant to address 21st century problems